

*Suggested Senate Reform*

by the hon. member for Hastings South (Mr. Follwell), Bill No. 354, an act to amend the British North America Acts, 1867 to 1952, with respect to tenure of place in the Senate. This bill would simply involve that part of the amendment which says, "and their tenure of office." There is still a chance to debate that bill now on the order paper. In any event, I am not making an issue of it. I am just informing the mover of this amendment that there is such a bill with respect to tenure of office on the order paper.

**Mr. M. J. Coldwell (Rosetown-Biggart):** Mr. Speaker, I rise to say something about this rather important amendment. I noted the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Drew) said that it was introduced at this rather late date in the session in order that consideration could be given to it, and possibly a similar motion might be moved at the next session, at which time the house could consider it at length, and probably come to some understanding as to what steps would be taken by the government to bring about a reform of the other place.

**Mr. Drew:** I do not wish to interrupt the hon. member, but as a courtesy I would point out that what I said was that I expressed the hope that the government would be ready to come back and recommend to us the course we should follow.

**Mr. Coldwell:** Yes, I accept that suggestion—although the other may be what will have to be done.

As is well known, the group for whom I speak today believes that reform of the Senate should be much more drastic than the Leader of the Opposition has in mind, and that the reform should include the abolition of the Senate, taking into consideration the steps that have to be taken and the negotiations that have to be undertaken in order to bring this about.

And may I say that such reform is not unknown in our democratic parliaments across the world. In our own country we used to have second chambers in the provinces, but in all but one they have been abolished.

I hold in my hand the constitution of the Kingdom of Norway. When this matter has been up before I have often referred to this constitution. I was unaware that the matter was going to be brought up at this session; but it so happens that about six or eight months ago I obtained a couple of copies of the constitution of Norway.

There they have a single chamber; and I submit that we could study the constitution of that country with a view to adapting the provisions of that constitution regarding review and reconsideration which the Leader

[Mr. Speaker.]

of the Opposition has said is the main function of the other place. The example given us in the constitution of Norway is one which is worthy of consideration.

This constitution, after indicating how the Storting shall be elected and set up, says this:

The Storting shall nominate from among its members one-fourth to constitute the Lagting; the remaining three-fourths shall constitute the Odelsting. This nomination shall take place at the first ordinary Storting that assembles after a new general election, and thereafter the Lagting shall remain unchanged at all Stortings that meet after the same election, except in so far as any vacancy which may occur among its members has to be filled by special nomination.

That is, one-quarter of the newly elected parliament, as constituted by the Storting, forms itself into what amounts to a reviewing section or portion of the parliament of that country. Then it continues:

Each Ting shall hold its meetings separately and nominate its own president and secretary. Neither of the Tings may hold a meeting unless at least one-half of its members are present. Bills concerning amendments of the constitution may not be dealt with unless at least two-thirds of the members of the Storting are present.

That is the machinery. Then let us take a look at what happens to bills introduced into the Norwegian parliament. It says:

Every bill shall first be introduced in the Odelsting, either by one of its own members, or by the government through a member of the Council of State . . .

That is somewhat analogous to our governor in council.

The legislation then is introduced into the equivalent of our House of Commons, the lower house. It continues:

If the bill is passed, it is sent to the Lagting, which either approves or rejects it, and in the latter case sends it back with comments appended. These are taken into consideration by the Odelsting, which either lets the bill fall or again sends it to the Lagting, with or without alteration.

That follows very closely the present situation in Great Britain, where the House of Lords once had complete veto of legislation passed by the House of Commons. But since 1911, when the parliament bill was introduced in that country by Mr. Asquith, the powers of the House of Lords have been limited, so that a bill passed twice by the House of Commons, on the third occasion on which it goes to the House of Lords, must be automatically adopted. Here, at least in theory, the Senate has a complete veto. If the other chamber wishes, it can reject any legislation, except money bills, forwarded to it from this House of Commons.

I submit that is not democratic procedure. There is no direct responsibility to the people by members in the other place. And to have that power, one which 43 years ago was